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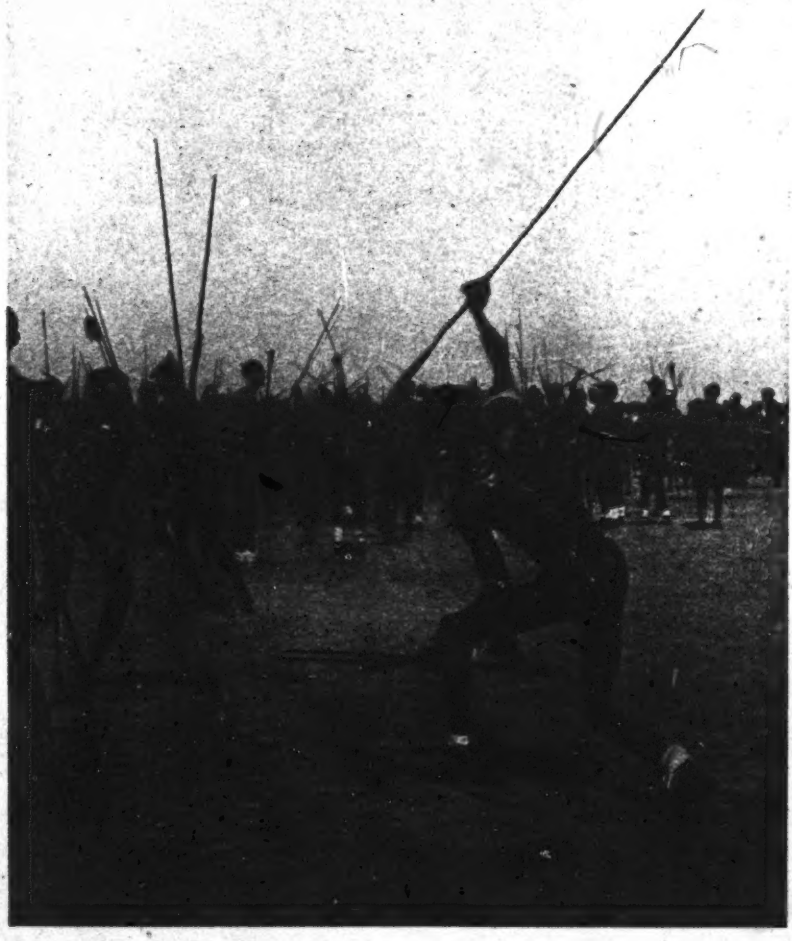

A wedding dance

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if he has not done so earlier, throws on to the threshold of his mother-in-law's hut, if she has not yet reached the menopause, a tethering-cord, as an earnest that the *yang pal*, a cow to prolong her fertility, will be paid. He will already have given her a present of tobacco.

The wedding takes place some weeks later, and in the meanwhile there are further discussions about bridewealth not only in the home of the bride's father but also in the home of her senior maternal uncle, who is responsible for the negotiations on the mother's side. His claims are less flexible and there cannot be much dispute about them, so it sometimes happens that they are settled provisionally in the father's byre, and that the final discussions with the uncle himself, who may live far away, are left till after the wedding or even till after the consummation. Some more cattle will probably be handed over before the wedding.

Between the betrothal and the wedding the bridegroom is *lipe nyal*, a man to whom a bride is affianced, but he and she are spoken of as man and wife and the bridegroom acts towards his in-laws with the full respect due from a son-in-law. From time to time he visits his bride's home in the company of his best man and other friends, and on these occasions he may try to have relations with her, but it will be difficult for him because he is closely watched and others probably share the hut in which he and she are sleeping. In any case he cannot enforce marital rights at this stage, and his only hope is to get his best man to persuade his bride to visit him in the gardens.

Both sides want to complete the marriage without undue delay. The bridegroom's people want their wife and the bride's people want their cattle so that they themselves can marry. They do not care to use the cattle of the betrothal for this purpose because these are only on pledge and, if negotiations break down, have at once to be returned, or others substituted if they have died. In the interval between betrothal and wedding ceremonies a penultimate agreement is reached about the cattle and both parties have had time to accommodate themselves to their new interrelationships. Neither party would pursue the marriage to the point of holding the wedding, with its expense and publicity, unless they were confident of the outcome.

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Arrangements are made to hold the wedding on a certain day. In the homestead of the bride the reception, especially the beer, is

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585 being prepared, and in the homestead of the bridegroom there is much rejoicing, men and women chanting poems into the night. They also chant on their way to the wedding and during its celebration. The main features of a wedding are discussion about cattle in the morning and the invocation over the cattle of the bridewealth (*twoc ghok*), the wedding dance, and the wedding sacrifice, in the afternoon and evening.

Early in the morning the bridegroom's kin discuss the situation in his father's byre. They know what outstanding claims are likely to be advanced because they know the persons on the other side who stand in those relationships to the bride to which beasts are due by custom. They run over their herds and assign particular beasts to meet probable claims, so that no last-moment demand shall be made which they have not allowed for and cannot reject. Similar talks are going on among the bride's kin in her father's byre. They know more or less what animals the bridegroom can muster, and they have also to agree on the division of the bridewealth among themselves; the problem often being not so much the total number of beasts to be paid but to which of the bride's kin they shall be allotted. The bride's father will do his best to protect his son-in-law against too greedy kinsmen. As we have seen, the bridegroom's people have several times discussed the whole question of the bridewealth with the bride's people, but there are certain demands not yet agreed to, or kept back till the last moment so that they can be exacted under threat of forbidding the wedding dance.

The older people of the bridegroom's kin go ahead of the bridegroom's party of youths and maidens to the bride's home to finish the discussions in the late morning and early afternoon. They are generally still arguing when the bridegroom's party arrives, the paternal uncles on both sides taking the foremost part, for it is thought impolite of the fathers to take too prominent a part in the discussions, especially if they are younger than the uncles. The bridegroom's kin sit on the right side of the byre and the bride's kin on the left side, as they would sit were a case being arbitrated between them by a leopard-skin chief. The byre has been swept clean in expectation of the guests, and ox-hides and mats have been spread on the floor. The bridegroom and his master of ceremonies and the bride's father and his master of ceremonies wear wild-cat skins round their loins to hide their nakedness, and

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the master of ceremonies of the bridegroom holds a wedding stick across his knees. After the involved Nuer greetings have been exchanged they begin the final cattle talk over their pipes, each claim being stated and restated and discussed in the deliberate Nuer way—puff, puff, puff of tobacco, a few words, then puff, puff, puff again. While the *jicuong*, the people with rights to cattle of the bridewealth, are developing their claims, first on the father's side, then on the mother's side, the master of ceremonies of the bride brings a tray on which are lumps of tobacco and an equal number of pieces of charcoal and hands these round to the bridegroom's senior relatives. The cattle talk, even at this stage, is often loud and it looks, till one is used to Nuer, as though agreement would be impossible.

While the discussions are going on in the byre, the youths of the bridegroom's village charge into the homestead, chanting and skirmishing as they come. They rush the kraal and the bridegroom hurls his spear at his mother-in-law's *buor*, while the girls of the bride's village attack the visiting youths in mock combat and try to catch the bridegroom and seize his wedding stick. If they succeed he will have to pay them a calf. The *buor* is a mud windscreen, such as every Nuer woman has in front of her fireplace outside her hut. It is the symbol of domesticity and of wifely status and is associated with the spirit of the husband's lineage. On the occasion of the marriage of a daughter of the hut the windscreen is heightened, or a new one is constructed, for the bridegroom to spear, and some of his close kinsmen may spear it also. It is easily repaired. The spear belongs to the mother of the bride, but as it is a war spear one of the men of her homestead grabs it. The bridegroom has already given, or promised, her a pipe, tobacco, and a smaller spear, which she may give to a small son or keep for scraping hides. The bridegroom may also throw a spear into the threshold of the byre. This goes to his father-in-law. Other parties of youths from nearby villages are by this time beginning to arrive, for the wedding was announced by drums on the previous day. It is difficult for the older people, still talking in the byre and puffing away at their pipes and drinking beer, to hold up the dance any longer. They give permission for it to begin, and it continues for the rest of the afternoon and well into the night and is resumed on the following morning.

Before the dance begins, or as soon as it has begun, the kin on

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●585 either side signify their approval of the marriage by calling out the spear-names of the clans or maximal lineages of the bride and bridegroom and invoking the ghosts of their ancestors to look upon the cattle of the bridewealth—a rite which makes the ghosts partners to the union and witnesses of it. The master of ceremonies of the bride—his role is ritual and he has no part in the bridewealth talks—rises and demands a cow and receives the promise of a calf or sheep. He then walks up and down the byre, brandishing his spear and delivering a long address. He shouts out his ox-name and spear-name, and he calls on the ghosts of the bride's ancestors to witness that she is married openly with fifty cattle (it is conventional to say this number) and not with shame and by stealth. He says that she will bear her husband a male child. He addresses also the bridegroom's kin, his own kin, and anybody else he feels inclined to bring into his speech, and while talking he pours beer and sprinkles a little tobacco on the floor of the byre, on its threshold, and on the hearth in the centre of it, asking God (*Gwandong*) to take his 'cow', the tobacco. Then the master of ceremonies of the bridegroom's family, whose role is also purely ritual, has his say, or he may speak first. He talks in much the same vein and also pours out beer and sprinkles tobacco as an offering as he walks up and down the byre brandishing instead of a spear a wedding stick. The father of the bride may then speak and may be followed by a senior kinsman of the bridegroom. Afterwards people chant poems.

During the dance another rite, but not of the same importance, takes place. The father of the bride removes a tethering cord from one of the pegs in the kraal and throws it into the air between two lines of men drawn up for the purpose, the bride's relatives on one side and the bridegroom's relatives on the other. They try to hook it in the air with their spears and clubs, and whoever catches it may demand a calf or a goat from the opposite side, though he cannot be sure of receiving it.

Towards sunset, or on the following morning, the wedding ox, provided by the bride's father, is sacrificed by the master of ceremonies of her family or a senior kinsman. He rubs ashes on its back and speaks to it, saying: 'We do not kill you for an evil thing, we kill you about a good thing. Fall well.' It is a wedding ox and not a funeral ox. The meat, except for the head, neck, and a few other bits, goes to the bridegroom's kin who, as in the betrothal

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ceremony, divide the carcass, on the pattern of bridewealth distribution, between the kin on the father's side and those on the mother's side. The distribution of meat at these ceremonies depends on the number of relationships represented by persons or proxy, the number of persons standing in these relationships, and other circumstances. Most of it is taken back by the bridegroom's people to their homes for the older people who have not been able to attend the wedding and those who have remained to look after the herds and milk the cows. The rest is eaten on the spot.

A large part of the night is spent in dancing and flirting and love-making. The bride and the girls of her homestead are cooking while the bridegroom, who is fasting, is seeing that his companions are being properly looked after. On the following morning beer is served, pots being distributed to the bridegroom's kin—his father, his father's full brother, his father's half-brother, his paternal and maternal aunts, and his mother's full and half-brothers—who share the beer with members of their age-sets. After a meal the youths resume dancing and their elders, fortified with beer, probably start once more on the seemingly endless cattle talks, for there are generally an odd claim or two outstanding, the discussion of which was interrupted by the wedding dance, though their settlement was assured before it began.

If the maternal uncle of the bride lives far away he may give a wedding dance on his own account and sacrifice an ox at it. He may even do this when the father and he are members of the same large village. The senior paternal uncle occasionally does the same if he lives far away and is the father's half-brother.

The *ngut* does not conclude the marriage. It is the *mut* and the birth of a child which do this. But the chances are now greatly in favour of a successful conclusion, for had the bride's people not been satisfied with the bridewealth already handed over, or promised, they would not have allowed the dance to proceed. The wedding has also cost them a second ox for which there is no return in the event of the marriage not being consummated. Nevertheless, marriages do occasionally break up between wedding and consummation, though, in my experience, this is rare and is due to the reluctance of the bride rather than to objections or demands on the part of her family and kin.

The *mut*, the third of the three public marriage ceremonies, is

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585 the one which, at any rate among the eastern Nuer,* makes the union legally binding. After it the husband, as he can then be called, can claim compensation for adultery, which he could not have done before. Previously the bride's brothers did not feel it obligatory to prevent her from attending evening dances in the neighbourhood, though they well knew from their own experience that she was likely to have relations with her old sweethearts at them. Her future husband's people could not then complain if she attended these dances, whereas after the *mut* they would make an unpleasant scene were they to find her at one, for this ceremony makes man and wife, and the cattle which have been paid are no longer regarded as a pledge but as marriage cattle. They now say of the bride *'Te yang jokde'*, 'She has a cow (cattle) on her back.' Moreover, if cattle paid to the bride's family and kin die in their kraals before the *mut*—and they may all die in a year of rinderpest —they have to be replaced by the bridegroom's people, whereas if they die after the *mut* they still count as part of the bridewealth and the husband's people do not have to substitute for them similar beasts. This distinction does not apply to animals killed by the bride's family and kin or which have been disposed of by them and have died outside their kraals, for these count as bridewealth before, as well as after, the consummation. On the other hand, any calves the cattle may bear before this ceremony count as original bridewealth and not as increment. Likewise, if the incomplete union is broken before the *mut*, all the cattle and their increase, ... luding those which have died, must be returned, whereas in the event of divorce after the *mut*, the bride's people do not have to return animals which have died a natural death in their own kraals, and they have a right to retain two cows, the *yang yani* and the *yang miemne*, the cow of the skirts, the mark of married status, and the cow of the hairs, which are shaved off the bride's head at the consummation.

It is *mut*, therefore, which makes the union a contract. Consequently, it occasionally happens, when people are anxious to expedite the marriage, that the consummation takes place before the wedding. I heard it suggested that this should be done in the case of a youth who had been speared and could not take the

* Among the western Nuer it would seem to be the *twoc ghok*, the invocation of the ghosts, which permits a suit of adultery and may therefore be considered the action which makes the union a contract.

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585 bridegroom's usual part in weddings, and although it was decided to hold the wedding first, with the bridegroom as a spectator, no one suggested that in the circumstances a reversal of the ceremonies would have been improper. Mrs. Smith, of the American Mission, told me of a case of an elderly man who, desiring to marry a girl with the approval of her family but against her own wishes, prevailed on her relatives to rush her through the *mut*, leaving the wedding to be held later.

The day of the consummation has to be fixed in advance because beer has to be brewed for the visitors. In the early morning the bridegroom goes with a company of the youths of his village to fetch the bride, his womenfolk remaining behind to prepare for their visitors. They chant on the way, for this is a happy occasion for the village. Sometimes they find on arrival that the bride's mother has prepared beer for them. They have to ask her permission to take her daughter away and she asks them for presents before she gives it, such things as a spear, armlets, a pipe, and tobacco. The young men promise to give her what she asks for and depart, escorting the bride and her girl companions, who have oiled and decked themselves with ornaments for the ceremony. They go chanting to the bridegroom's village, one of the poems often being a composition of the bride in honour of her future husband, and there is much horseplay between the sexes. When they near the village the young men go ahead and the girls are met by the youths of the village, who bring them into the kraal where they serenade the bridegroom's mother with poems outside her hut. The ceremony is mostly a female affair, the men looking on.

After a while a kinsman of the bridegroom places a tethering-cord across the inner threshold of one of the huts and the bridegroom crawls over it, followed by the bride, the best man, and a special girl friend of the bride. This action is said to make the marriage fruitful. Then, towards evening, takes place the rite of consummation, though there is no invariable order of events in these ceremonies and no fixed time-table. The bride retires to a hut wearing a special goatskin cap and here the bridegroom joins her. His age-mates seek him out and say to him: 'Come now, let the people go to bed, come and loosen the bride's girdle.' He is bashful and gets the business over as quickly and inconspicuously as he can. He enters the hut and gives his bride a cut with a switch

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●585 and seizes her thigh, she refusing his advances and crouching by the wall of the hut. He strikes her with a tethering-cord, snatches the cap off her head, breaks her girdle, and consummates the marriage. Reluctance is imposed on her by custom and she pretends to resist even when she has known her husband often before in the gardens. It is not expected that a bride will be a virgin. Wedding and consummation ceremonies are held even for a girl who is pregnant or one who has been divorced and is being married a second time if she has not borne children. They say that 'She has returned to maidenhood'. It is only divorced women who have led profligate lives who are not remarried with these ceremonies. Maidenhood is a social, not a physical, state.

His duty done, the bridegroom leaves the hut, sometimes the bride's girl friends rushing at him and beating him with their fists as he emerges. The rest of the evening is given to the favourite pastimes of Nuer youth, *muong* and *lum*, visiting with the girls and making love to them. There will be many youths present: the people of the bridegroom's homestead, his mother's kin, if they live near, youths of the village, and bands of youths from villages for miles around, for the *mut* is a popular ceremony and it is known that many girls will attend it. Then all retire for the night, the bride's companions sleeping in a hut reserved for them.

On the following morning take place three rites which may on no account be omitted, the sacrifice (which may take place the evening before), the lustration, and the shaving of the bride's head. The sacrificial beast should be an ox, but if the bridegroom's father is poor, and at this stage of the marriage he is likely to be hard up, the 'cow of the consummation' may be a goat, or even just beer. The bridegroom's master of ceremonies rubs ashes on its back, calls out his spear-name, and speaks of the beast and the bride, telling the spirits and ghosts of his lineage to witness the union and to bless it with sons so that the lineage may continue. He says to them, 'Now you see your ox; you see this maid; let her be a good wife; let her bear many children, many sons; let her work well in her husband's home, milk the cows, dry the cattle dung; let her be a faithful wife and not a profligate'; and so forth, asking them to make the union a lasting and happy one. He then spears the ox and it is cut up by the wife's people, the visitors, and divided among them in the customary portions, only the head, neck, and a few other pieces of meat going to the people of the

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bridegroom. The visiting maidens at once cook and eat the ribs, kidneys, and stomach, besides filling themselves with porridge and beer, the bride alone abstaining because she may not eat in the home of her mother-in-law. They take the rest of the carcass back to their homes for their elders. The master of ceremonies may perform another duty associated with his office in anointing the bride with butter. Her father will already have blessed her in this manner before she set out for her husband's home.

Now takes place the rite of lustration, the *lak tetni ka cik*, the washing of the hands with bracelets. The visiting maidens, the young wife's companions, sit in a hut and a pot of warm water is passed to them. One of them washes her hands in the water and then takes a bracelet off her arm, drops it into the pot, and passes the pot to one of the husband's kinsfolk outside, who, squatting in front of it, likewise washes his hands in the water, and then fishes out the bracelet. The pot is returned to the hut and a different maiden and a different kinsman repeat the action of the first pair. All the close kinsfolk of the husband—his father's brothers and sisters, his mother's brothers and sisters, and his own brothers and sisters, and so on—are supposed to receive a bracelet, but, in fact, persons standing in some of these relationships will be absent. Any person who can claim kinship with the husband can demand a bracelet. If a man's dip into the pot reveals a poor bracelet he does not hesitate to upbraid the girl who put it there and he may select a better one from those on her arm.

The concluding rite of the ceremony is the act from which it derives its name, the shaving of the wife's head (*mut nyier*) by a member of her husband's family. This may take place after the departure of her companions, for it is a domestic affair of the husband's family, of which the wife is now a member. The shaving of the head signifies this change in her status. People speak of the rite as 'the removal of the hairs of maidenhood', and they say afterwards of the girl *'Ca ciek'*, 'She has become a wife'. She is at the same time stripped of all her ornaments, which are divided among her husband's kin, and she is arrayed in new finery provided by her husband. She belongs to his, and not her father's, people now and it is for them to adorn her.

The *mut* is the consummation of marriage, but not its completion, which is the birth of a child. The young wife is now called *ciek ma kau*, a newly-wed. Her parents give her a hut of her

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585 own and a sleeping-hide, a brush, and a couple of gourds for ablutions. When her husband comes to visit her in her father's home-
[591] stead he sleeps with her in this hut. She continues in all other respects to lead the life she led before marriage, and after her husband's visits she hangs up the hide and domestic utensils and sleeps with her unmarried sisters. On these visits her husband stays at a neighbouring homestead as he cannot eat in the home of his parents-in-law and ought not to be seen there at all. When someone tells the wife that her husband has come, so that she may prepare for him, she feigns annoyance or lack of interest, pretending that she is still unmarried, a shyness she keeps up with third persons, though she is at ease when alone with her husband. When everyone is asleep he visits her and spends the night with her, leaving before any of the bride's people are about. Her parents are supposed to know nothing of his visits, though, of course, they know all about his movements, and it is even said that his mother-in-law may rise especially early and squint through a crack in the door of her hut to see him depart. I was told that should he oversleep and his mother-in-law see his spears outside her daughter's hut, she makes them forfeit, and he would be ashamed to ask for them back. It is not till a child has been born that the husband is accepted by his wife's people as one of themselves. He is then the father of their daughter's child and through the child has a kind of kinship with them. Till this happens the husband continues to lead the life he lived before marriage, a bachelor life with his younger brothers in their father's byre. His wife visits him only on rare occasions and for a formal purpose, as when, at harvest time, she brings him coverings she has made for the grain on the drying-platforms, or when she takes him a bundle of well-cooked porridge made from the first millet of the year—a pretty custom known as *puthene kuan*, honouring with porridge.

842 All are equally anxious for a child to be born, the husband and wife because they want a son, and the wife's parents and kin because they cannot, without risking complications, dispose of the cattle of the marriage till a first-born completes the union. Those whose daughters they might wish to marry would not be happy about accepting such cattle as bridewealth in case they had sud-
853 denly to be returned to the husband. When a child is born the
591 mother remains with her parents till she has weaned it. This is a
862 suitable regulation, because after bridewealth has been paid the

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585 The marriage has thus reached completion through many stages: betrothal ceremony, wedding ceremony, consummation ceremony, the birth of a child, the bringing of the first-born to his father's byre, and the presentation to the wife of a spoon as a sign of her domestic separation from her family. She comes to her husband's home not as a wife but as a mother whose breasts have suckled a child of their lineage.

III

583 Like many other African peoples the Nuer marry by the family and kin of the bridegroom handing over cattle to the family and kin of the bride. The marriage is brought about by this payment and by the performance of the series of ceremonial acts I have just described. These ceremonies and payments of cattle proceed *pari passu* as inter-connected movements towards the completion of the union. It should be remembered that Nuer do not consider the union to be complete till a child has been born of it, even though spouses may continue to cohabit where the union proves to be unfruitful.

I first describe the principles on which bridewealth is paid. These can be simply stated. In actual marriages the payment and distribution of the cattle may be complicated, but if one asks a Nuer how, on marriage, the bridewealth is divided, he gives at once its ideal distribution and it will be found that actual distribution in any particular marriage is made to approximate as far as possible to this ideal. Consequently, once the general principles of transfer are understood, the distribution of cattle on any particular marriage can be readily understood also.

583 602 Bridewealth should consist of 40 head of cattle. Among the eastern Nuer 20 are said to go *kwi gwan*, to the father's side, and 20 *kwi man*, to the mother's side, of the bride. Equal division between the bride's paternal kinsmen (including her father) and her maternal kinsmen (including her mother) is thus the first rule of distribution. Of the 20 beasts which go to the father's side, 10 remain with the father (or his sons) and 10 are divided among his family (his parents, brothers, and sisters); and of the 20 beasts which go to the mother's side, 10 remain with the mother (or her sons) and 10 are divided among her family (her parents and brothers and sisters). The second rule, therefore, is that the cattle are distributed in fixed proportions between three families: the

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NUER MARRIAGE CEREMONIES[1]

E. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD

581 MARRIAGE among the Nuer is brought about by payment of bridewealth and by the performance of certain ceremonial rites. The rites cannot take place
• 585 without the payments, but transfers of cattle do not by themselves bring about the union. Both are necessary and they proceed in a connected movement towards the
431 full establishment of the union. Each enforces and reinforces the other. The bride's people can, by holding up the rites, put pressure on the bridegroom's people to make the payments due to them, and the bridegroom's people can, by withholding the cattle, induce the girl's family and kin to advance the ceremonies. First one pedal is pressed down and then the other as the marriage is propelled to its appointed end, the birth of children and the sharing of a home. It is undertsood that payments should have reached a certain point before a certain rite is held, and the performance of the rite is a recognition of the transfer of cattle up to that point. Payments of cattle and marriage rites therefore tend to alternate, though there is no fixity about the alternation and no marriage is exactly the same as another in this respect. The new social ties of conjugality and affinity are made stronger by each payment and by each ceremony, so that a marriage which is insecure at the beginning of the negotiations becomes surer with every new payment and rite; both sides, by the giving and receiving of cattle and by joint participation in the rites, becoming more deeply committed to bringing about the union. Therefore a marriage which has reached the final rites may be regarded as a stable union and will generally prove to be so.

Some General Features of the Ceremonies

584 The chief ceremonies are the *larieng*, the *ngut*, and the *miut*: the betrothal, the
585 wedding, and the consummation. All three are important public events in Nuer life,
574 though the betrothal rites are not held on so large a scale to the west of the Nile as to the east. Preparations for them are made days, even weeks, ahead, and they are talked about, especially by the young people, long before they take place. They are usually held in the rains, for there is then plenty of millet for porridge and beer, and people have the energy of the well-fed and can travel long distances without fatigue and dance and make love with equal vigour. A whole district attends them, young men thinking nothing of walking over ten miles to take part in the dancing, the mere coming together of so many people making marriage a memorable event. Neighbours thus bear witness to the creation of the new social ties and by their presence sanction them.

Neighbours form the crowd at marriage feasts. They have no direct concern with the union. Apart from these people who attend the ceremonies for dancing and

[1] This description of marriage ceremonies which I have seen, some of them many times, when living among the Nuer of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, is part of a general account of Nuer marriage, some sections of which have already been published. *Some Aspects of Marriage and the Family among the Nuer*, Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 1945 (first published in 1938 in the *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft*); and 'Nuer Bridewealth', *Africa*, vol. xvi, no. 4, 1946. The oecological and political background is given in *The Nuer*, Clarendon Press, 1940.

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584 flirting and for the general sociability and excitement, are those who attend them for more serious purposes. It will be seen from this paper that there are always, •585 besides prolonged discussions about bridewealth, sacrifices, and other rites which 574 have to be performed and which interest only some of the people present—the families and kin of the bride and bridegroom. These are the rites which express the relations between husband and wife, husband's kin and wife's kin, and between the kin on one side or the other and the ghosts and spirits of their lineage. Those who stand outside these relationships are only spectators and very often pay no attention to the rites at all. It is the dance which gives to the ceremonies their popularity and publicity; it is the rites which express and bring about their purpose.

An essential rite in the marriage ceremonies is the sacrifice of a beast to the ghosts and spirits by which they are made cognizant, and witnesses, of the union in an address delivered to them before the beast is slain. This part of the rite concerns only the close kin of the bride or bridegroom and the address is sometimes spoken in so low a tone that it is almost inaudible amid the general clamour. People chat and shout to each other about affairs which have no connexion with the marriage, or interpolate comments into the address, a long rambling speech which may refer to almost anything which interests the speaker so long as he mentions the object of the rite and puts into it now and again some traditional phrases. The young people are dancing, the women engaged in household tasks, and it is the older men, mostly kinsmen of the bride and bridegroom, who gather round to watch the sacrifice, which to them is just one of the phases of the ceremony, like the bridewealth talks and the beer-drinking, and does not entail any special attitude on their part. The sacrifice also is often a great confusion, everyone shouting advice and instructions to everyone else and arguing good-humouredly about the division of the meat. The specifically religious part of a ceremony seems to be lost amid all the talk and movement, but it is none the less the core of the ceremony, what occasions it and gives it meaning.

Even the kinsmen of the bride or bridegroom, as the case may be, attend the sacrifice largely because it is the prelude to a division of meat, for though the ox is dedicated to the ghosts and spirits, its material destiny is to be eaten by the kin of one partner to the marriage, who, being guests, have to be provided with meat by the kin of the other partner. The people who sacrifice the beast, usually an ox, eat very little of it. They are interested in the religious part of the rite since it is their ancestors and spirits to whom the beast is dedicated. The visitors are not concerned with the ghosts and spirits of the other party but are interested in the meat which is their due, to each kinsman his customary portion. A sacrifice is thus a distribution of gifts of meat by the kin of one of the spouses to the kin of the other.

One notices the same lack of formality in the order of the rites, and the sequence of their parts, as in the performance of them. The place of each movement is determined only by the logic of necessity. An ox has to be pegged before it can be speared and it has to be skinned before it can be cut up and cooked. Otherwise there is merely a usual time for acts to be done, though it would not matter if they were done at a different time or in a different order. For example, it is usual to sacrifice an ox at the betrothal ceremony towards the end of the evening dance, but it can equally well be done on the following morning. Nuer ritual procedure is generally happy-go-lucky.

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elders in the bridegroom's village and the rest is eaten on the spot. The girls of the bride's village who, like its menfolk, receive little or none of the meat, are up half the night cooking porridge, preparing beer, and boiling the meat for their guests, for the girls of the bridegroom's party are too busy flirting with the youths to assist them.

In the morning there is more dancing and beer is served to the guests before they depart. Shortly before they go the bridegroom, if he has not done so earlier, throws on to the threshold of his mother-in-law's hut, if she has not yet reached the menopause, a tethering-cord, as an earnest that the *yang pal*, a cow to prolong her fertility, will be paid. He will already have given her a present of tobacco.

The wedding takes place some weeks later and in the meanwhile there are further discussions about bridewealth not only in the home of the bride's father but also in the home of her senior maternal uncle, who is responsible for the negotiations on the mother's side. His claims are less flexible and there cannot be much dispute about them, so it sometimes happens that they are settled provisionally in the father's byre and that the final discussions with the uncle himself, who may live far away, are left till after the wedding or even till after the consummation. Some more cattle will probably be handed over before the wedding.

Between the betrothal and the wedding the bridegroom is *lipe nyal*, a man to whom a bride is affianced, but he and she are spoken of as man and wife and the bridegroom acts towards his in-laws with the full respect due from a son-in-law. From time to time he visits his wife's home in the company of his best man and other friends, and on these occasions he may try to cohabit with his wife, but it will be difficult for him because he is closely watched and others probably share the hut in which he and she are sleeping. In any case he cannot enforce marital rights at this stage and his only hope is to get his best man to persuade his bride to visit him in the gardens.

The Wedding

Both sides want to complete the marriage without undue delay. The bridegroom's people want their wife and the bride's people want their cattle so that they themselves can marry. They do not care to use the cattle of the betrothal for this purpose because these are only on pledge and, if negotiations break down, have at once to be returned, or others substituted if they have died. In the interval between betrothal and wedding ceremonies a penultimate agreement is reached about the cattle and both parties have had time to accommodate themselves to their new interrelationships. Neither party would pursue the marriage to the point of holding the wedding, with its expense and publicity, unless they were confident of the outcome.

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Arrangements are made to hold the wedding on a certain day. In the homestead of the bride the reception, especially the beer, is being prepared, and in the homestead of the bridegroom there is much rejoicing, men and women chanting songs or poems into the night. They also chant on their way to the wedding and during its celebration. The main features of a wedding (*kwiɔ*) are discussion about cattle in the morning and the invocation over the cattle of the bridewealth (*twoc ghok*), the wedding dance, and the wedding sacrifice, in the afternoon and evening.

Early in the morning the bridegroom's kin discuss the situation in his father's byre. They know what outstanding claims are likely to be advanced because they

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585 know the persons on the other side who stand in those relationships to the bride to which beasts are due by custom. They run over their herds and assign particular beasts to meet probable claims, so that no last-moment demand shall be made which they have not allowed for or cannot reject. Similar talks are going on among the bride's kin in her father's byre. They know more or less what animals the bridegroom can muster and they have also to agree on the division of the bridewealth among themselves; the problem often being not so much the total number of beasts to be paid but to which of the bride's kin they shall be allotted. The bride's father will do his best to protect his son-in-law against too greedy kinsmen. As we have seen, the bridegroom's people have several times discussed the whole question of the bridewealth with the bride's people, but there are certain to be demands not yet agreed to, or kept back till the last moment, so that they can be exacted under threat of forbidding the wedding dance.

The older people of the bridegroom's kin go ahead of the bridegroom's party of youths and maidens to the bride's home to finish the discussions in the late morning and early afternoon. They are generally still arguing when the bridegroom's party arrives, the paternal uncles on both sides taking the foremost part, for it is thought impolite of the fathers to take too prominent a part in the discussions, especially if they are younger than the uncles. The bridegroom's kin sit on the right side of the byre and the bride's kin, often called *jitwar*, on the left side, as they would sit were a case being arbitrated between them by a leopard-skin chief. The byre has been swept clean in expectation of the guests, and ox-hides and mats have been spread on the floor. The bridegroom and his *gwan buthni* and the bride's father and his *gwan buthni* wear wild-cat skins round their loins to hide their nakedness, and the *gwan buthni* of the bridegroom holds a wedding stick across his knees (occasionally a woman officiates in this capacity). After the involved Nuer greetings have been exchanged they begin the final cattle talk over their pipes, each claim being stated and restated and discussed in the deliberate Nuer way—puff, puff, puff of tobacco, a few words, then puff, puff, puff again. While the *jicwong*, the people with rights to cattle of the bridewealth, are developing their claims, first on the father's side, then on the mother's side, the *gwan buthni* of the bride brings a tray on which are lumps of tobacco and an equal number of pieces of charcoal and hands these round to the bridegroom's senior relatives. The cattle talk, even at this stage, is often loud and it looks, till one is used to Nuer, as though agreement would be impossible.

While the discussions are going on in the byre, the youths of the bridegroom's village charge into the homestead, chanting and skirmishing as they come. They rush the kraal and the bridegroom hurls his spear at his mother-in-law's *buor*, while the girls of the bride's village attack the visiting youths in mock combat and try to catch the bridegroom and seize his wedding stick. If they succeed he will have to pay them a calf. The *buor* is a mud windscreen, such as every Nuer woman has in front of her fireplace outside her hut; it is the symbol of domesticity and of wifely status and is associated with the spirit of the husband's lineage. On the occasion of the marriage of a daughter of the hut the windscreen is heightened, or a new one is constructed for the bridegroom to spear, and some of his close kinsmen may spear it also. It is easily repaired. The spear belongs to the mother of the bride, but as it is a war spear one of the men of her homestead grabs it. The bridegroom

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has already given, or promised, her a pipe, tobacco, and a smaller spear, which she may give to a small son or keep for scraping hides. The bridegroom may also throw a spear into the threshold of the byre. This goes to his father-in-law. Other parties of youths from nearby villages are by this time beginning to arrive, for the wedding was announced by drums on the previous day. It is difficult for the older people, still talking in the byre and puffing away at their pipes and drinking beer, to hold up the dance any longer. They give permission for it to begin and it continues for the rest of the afternoon and well into the night and is resumed on the following morning.

Before the dance begins, or as soon as it has begun, the kin on both sides signify their approval of the marriage by calling out the spear-names of the lineages of the bride and bridegroom and invoking the ghosts of their ancestors to look upon the cattle of the bridewealth—a rite which makes them partners to the union and witnesses of it. The *gwan buthni* of the bride—his role is ritual and he has no part in the bridewealth talks—rises and demands a cow and receives the promise of a calf or sheep. He then walks up and down the byre, brandishing his spear and delivering a long address. He shouts out his ox-name and the spear-name of his lineage and he calls on the ghosts of the bride's ancestors to witness that she is married openly with 50 cattle (it is conventional to say this number) and not with shame and by stealth. He says that she will bear her husband a male child. He addresses also the bridegroom's kin, his own kin, and anybody else he feels inclined to bring into his speech, and while talking he pours beer and sprinkles a little tobacco on the floor of the byre, on its threshold, and on the hearth in the centre of it, asking God (*Gwandong*) to take his 'cow', the tobacco. Then the *gwan buthni* of the bridegroom's lineage, whose role is also purely ritual, has his say, or he may speak first. He talks in much the same vein and also pours out beer and sprinkles tobacco in sacrifice as he walks up and down the byre brandishing, instead of a spear, a wedding stick. The father of the bride may then speak and may be followed by a senior kinsman of the bridegroom. Then people chant poems.

During the dance another rite, but not of the same importance, takes place. The father of the bride removes a tethering cord from one of the pegs in the kraal and throws it into the air between two lines of men drawn up for the purpose, the bride's relatives on one side and the bridegroom's relatives on the other. They try to hook it in the air with their spears and clubs and whoever catches it may demand a calf or a goat from the opposite side, though he cannot be sure of receiving it.

Towards sunset, or on the following morning, the marriage ox, provided by the bride's father, is sacrificed by the *gwan buthni* of her lineage or a senior kinsman. He rubs ashes on its back and speaks to it saying: 'We do not kill you for an evil thing, we kill you about a good thing. Fall well.' It is a wedding ox and not a funeral ox. The meat, except for the head, neck, and a few other bits, goes to the bridegroom's kin who, as in the betrothal ceremony, divide the carcass, on the principle determining the division of bridewealth, between the kin *kwi gwan*, on the father's side, and those, *kwi mun*, on the mother's side. The distribution at these ceremonies depends on the number of relationships represented by persons or proxy, the number of persons standing in these relationships, and other circumstances. Most of the meat is taken back by the bridegroom's people to their homes for the older people

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585 who have not been able to attend the wedding and those who have remained to look after the herds and milk the cows. The rest is eaten on the spot.

A large part of the night is spent in dancing and flirting and love-making. The bride and the girls of her homestead are cooking while the bridegroom, who is fasting, is seeing that his companions are being properly looked after. On the following morning beer is served, pots being distributed to the bridegroom's kin, his father, his father's full-brother, his father's half-brother, his paternal and maternal aunts, and his mother's full- and half-brothers, who share the beer with members of their age-sets. After a meal the youths resume dancing and their elders, fortified with beer, probably start once more on the seemingly endless cattle talks, for there are generally an odd claim or two outstanding, the discussion of which was interrupted by the wedding dance, though their settlement was assured before it began.

The *ngut* does not conclude the marriage. It is the *mut* and the birth of a child which do this. But the chances are now overwhelmingly in favour of a successful conclusion, for had the bride's people not been satisfied with the bridewealth already handed over, or promised, they would not have allowed the dance to proceed. The wedding has also cost them a second ox for which there is no return in the event of the marriage not being consummated. Nevertheless, marriages do occasionally break up between wedding and consummation, though, in my experience, this is rare and is due to the reluctance of the bride rather than to objections or demands on the part of her family and kin.

If the maternal uncle of the bride lives too far away for his people to attend the bridewealth talks and the wedding, talks will be held later in his byre to settle the cattle due to him and his brothers and sisters, and he may give a wedding dance on his own account and sacrifice an ox at it. He may even do this when the father and he are members of the same large village. The senior paternal uncle occasionally does the same if he lives far away and is the father's half-brother.

The Consummation

The *mut*, the third of the three public marriage ceremonies, is the one which, at any rate among the eastern Nuer,[1] makes the union legally binding. After it the husband, as he can then be called, can claim compensation for adultery, which he could not have done before. Previously the bride's brothers did not feel it obligatory to prevent her from attending evening dances in the neighbourhood, though they well knew from their own experience that she was likely to have relations with old sweethearts at them. Her future husband's people could not then complain if she attended these dances, whereas after the *mut* they would make an unpleasant scene were they to find her at one, for this ceremony makes man and wife, and the cattle which have been paid are no longer regarded as a pledge but as marriage cattle. They now say of the bride *Te yang jokde* ('She has cattle on her back'). Moreover, if cattle paid to the bride's family and kin die in their kraals before the *mut*—and they may all die in a year of rinderpest—they have to be replaced by the bridegroom's people, whereas if they die after the *mut* they still count as part of the bridewealth and the husband's people do not have to substitute for them similar beasts. This

[1] Among the western Nuer it would seem to be the *tuar glok*, the invocation of the ghosts, which permits a suit of adultery and may therefore be considered the action which makes the union a contract.

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distinction does not apply to animals killed by the bride's family and kin or which have been disposed of by them and have died outside their kraals, for these count as bridewealth before, as well as after, the consummation. On the other hand, any calves the cattle may bear before this ceremony count as original bridewealth and not as increment. Likewise, if the incomplete union is broken before the *mut*, all the cattle and their increase, including those which have died, must be returned, whereas in the event of divorce after the *mut* the bride's people do not have to return animals which have died a natural death in their own kraals, and they have a right to retain two cows, the *yang yani* and the *yang miemne*, the cow of the skirt, the mark of married status, and the cow of the hair, which is shaved off the bride's head at the consummation.

It is the *mut* therefore which makes the union a contract. Consequently, it occasionally happens, when people are anxious to expedite the marriage, that the consummation takes place before the wedding. I heard it suggested that this should be done in the case of a youth who had been speared and could not take the bridegroom's usual part in weddings, and although it was decided to hold the wedding first, with the bridegroom as a spectator, no one suggested that in the circumstances a reversal of the ceremonies would have been improper. Mrs. Smith, of the American Mission, told me of a case of an elderly man who, desiring to marry a girl with the approval of her family but against her own wishes, prevailed on her relatives to rush her through the *mut*, leaving the wedding to be held later.

The day of the consummation has to be fixed in advance because beer has to be brewed for the visitors. In the early morning the bridegroom goes with a company of the youths of his village to fetch the bride, his womenfolk remaining behind to prepare for their visitors. They chant on the way, for this is a happy occasion for the village. Sometimes they find on arrival that the bride's mother has prepared beer for them. They have to ask her permission to take her daughter away and she asks them for presents before she gives it, such things as a spear, armlets, a pipe, and tobacco. The young men promise to give her what she asks for and depart, escorting the bride and her girl companions, who have oiled and decked themselves with ornaments for the ceremony. They go chanting to the bridegroom's village, one of the poems often being a composition of the bride in honour of her future husband, and there is much horseplay between the sexes. When they near the village the young men go ahead and the girls are met by the youths of the village who bring them into the kraal where they serenade the bridegroom's mother with poems outside her hut. The ceremony is mostly a female affair, the men looking on.

After a while a kinsman of the bridegroom places a tethering-cord across the inner threshold of one of the huts and the bridegroom crawls over it, followed by the bride, the best man, and a special girl friend of the bride. This action is said to make the marriage fruitful. Then, towards evening, takes place the rite of consummation, though it must be said again that there is no invariable order of events in these ceremonies and no fixed time-table. The bride retires to a hut wearing a special goatskin cap and here the bridegroom joins her. His age-mates seek him out and say to him: 'Come now, let the people go to bed, come and loosen the bride's girdle.' He is bashful and gets the business over as quickly and inconspicuously as he can. He enters the hut and gives his bride a cut with a switch and seizes her thigh, she

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refusing his advances and crouching by the wall of the hut. He strikes her with a tethering-cord, snatches the cap off her head, breaks her girdle, and consummates the marriage. Reluctance is imposed on her by custom and she pretends to resist even when she has known her husband often before in the gardens. In Nuerland it is most unlikely that a bride will be a virgin. That is not expected. Wedding and consummation ceremonies are held even for a girl who is pregnant or one who has been divorced and is being married a second time if she has not borne children. They say that 'She has returned to maidenhood.' It is only divorced women who have led profligate lives who are not remarried with these ceremonies. Maidenhood is a social, not a physical, state.

His duty done, the bridegroom leaves the hut, sometimes the bride's girl friends rushing at him and beating him with their fists as he emerges. The rest of the evening is given to the favourite pastimes of Nuer youth, *muong* and *lum*, flirting with the girls and making love to them. There will be many youths present: the people of the bridegroom's homestead, his mother's kin, if they live near, the local *dep*, the youths of the village, and bands of youths from villages for miles round, for the *nuut* is a popular ceremony and it is known that many girls will attend it. Then all retire for the night, the bride's companions sleeping in a hut reserved for them.

On the following morning take place three rites which may on no account be omitted, the sacrifice (which may take place the evening before), the lustration, and the shaving of the bride's head. The sacrificial beast should be an ox, but if the bridegroom's father is poor, and at this stage of the marriage he is likely to be hard up, the *yang nuot*, the 'cow' of the consummation, may be a goat, or even just beer. The bridegroom's *gwan buthni* rubs ashes on its back, calls out the spear-name of his lineage and speaks of the beast and the bride, telling the spirits and ghosts of his lineage to witness the union and to bless it with sons so that the lineage may continue. He says to them, 'Now you see your ox; you see this maid; let her be a good wife; let her bear many children, many sons; let her work well in her husband's home, milk the cows, dry the cattle dung; let her be a faithful wife and not a profligate'; and so forth, asking them to make the union a lasting and happy one. He then spears the ox and it is cut up by the wife's people, the visitors, and divided among them in the customary portions, only the head, neck, and a few other pieces of meat going to the people of the bridegroom. The visiting maidens at once cook and eat the ribs, kidneys, and stomach, besides filling themselves with porridge and beer, the bride alone abstaining because she may not eat in the home of her mother-in-law. They take the rest of the carcass back to their homes for their elders. As generally happens when there is a feast, outsiders, persons not of the bridegroom's closest kin, hang about the carcass like kites when it is being cut up, hoping to obtain a piece of meat by begging, snatching, or persistently getting in the way. There is much shouting, argument, and general confusion. The *gwan buthni* may perform another duty associated with his office in anointing the bride with butter. Her father will already have blessed her in this manner before she set out to go to her husband's home.

Now takes place the rite of lustration, the *lak teetni ka ciik*, the washing of the hands with bracelets. The visiting maidens, the young wife's companions, sit in a hut and a pot of warm water is passed to them. One of them washes her hands in the water and then takes a bracelet off her arm, drops it into the pot, and passes the pot to one

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of the husband's kinsfolk outside, who, squatting in front of it, likewise washes his hands in the water, and then fishes out the bracelet. The pot is returned to the hut and a different maiden and a different kinsman repeat the action of the first pair. All the close kinsfolk of the husband—his father's brothers and sisters, his mother's brothers and sisters, and his own brothers and sisters, and so on—are supposed to receive a bracelet, but, in fact, persons standing in some of these relationships will be absent and any person who can claim kinship with the husband can demand a bracelet. If a man's dip into the pot reveals a poor bracelet he does not hesitate to upbraid the girl who put it there and he may select a better one from those on her arm.

The concluding rite of the ceremony is the act from which it derives its name, the shaving of the wife's head (*mut nyier*) by a member of her husband's family. This may take place after the departure of her companions, for it is a domestic affair of the husband's *gol*, his home, of which the wife is now a member. The shaving of the head signifies this change in her status. People speak of the rite as *woci miem nyietde*, the removal of the hairs of maidenhood, and they say afterwards of the girl *Caa cek*, 'She has become a wife'. She is at the same time stripped of all her ornaments, which are divided among her husband's kin, and she is arrayed in new finery provided by her husband. She belongs to his, and not her father's, people now and it is for them to adorn her.

The Birth of a Child

The *mut* is the consummation of marriage, but not its completion, which is the birth of a child. The young wife is now called *cek ma kau*, a newly wed. Her parents give her a hut of her own and a sleeping-hide, a brush, and a couple of gourds for ablutions. When her husband comes to visit her in her father's homestead he sleeps with her in this hut. She continues in all other respects to lead the life she led before marriage, and after her husband's visits she hangs up the hide and domestic utensils and sleeps with her unmarried sisters. On these visits her husband stays at a neighbouring homestead as he cannot eat in the home of his parents-in-law and ought not to be seen there at all. When someone tells the wife that her husband has come, so that she may prepare for him, she feigns annoyance or lack of interest, pretending that she is still unmarried, a shyness she keeps up with third persons, though she is at ease when alone with her husband. When everyone is asleep he visits her and spends the night with her, leaving before any of the bride's people are about; her parents are supposed to know nothing of his visits, though, of course, they know all about his movements and it is even said that his mother-in-law may rise especially early and squint through a crack in the door of her hut in order to see him depart. Should he oversleep, and his mother-in-law sees his spears outside her daughter's hut, she makes them forfeit and he would be ashamed to ask for them back. It is not till a child has been born that the husband is accepted by his wife's people as one of themselves; he is then the father of their daughter's child and through the child has a kind of kinship link with them. Till this happens the husband continues to lead the life he lived before marriage, a bachelor life with his younger brothers in their father's byre. His wife visits him only on rare occasions and for a formal purpose, as when, at harvest time, she brings him coverings she has made for the grain on the drying-platforms, or when she takes him a bundle of well-cooked porridge made

593 591 from the first millet of the year—a pretty custom known as *puthem kuon*, honouring with porridge.

All are equally anxious for a child to be born, the husband and wife because they want a son and the wife's parents and kin because they cannot, without risking 842 complications, dispose of the cattle of the marriage till a first-born completes the union. Those whose daughters they might wish to marry would not be happy about accepting such cattle as bridewealth in case they had suddenly to be returned to the husband. 591 When a child is born the mother remains with her parents till she has weaned it. This is a suitable regulation, because after the bridewealth has been paid the husband's father is likely to be short of lactating cows, while the wife's parents will have plenty of milk from their herd. If, for some reason, the wife goes to live with her husband 862 before the child is weaned, it may not be weaned without the consent of her parents, 602 and I have seen a husband pay several cattle to atone for contravention of this rule. A *kuc*, first child, belongs to the home of his maternal grandparents and if he is 603 weaned in his father's home he returns to live with them, a boy till he is initiated and 858 a girl till she is betrothed. This is the rule, though there is variation in practice, depending on the ability of the maternal grandparents to support the child and on the relations between them and their son-in-law.

852 Shortly after the birth of her first-born the wife, now called *pai dap*, a nursing mother, brings the baby to her husband's home and lays him in the ashes of the hearth 591 in the centre of his grandfather's byre, a rite known as *nong puka*, the bringing to the [273] ashes. Beer has been prepared and is drunk by a few senior kinsmen of the husband who live in his hamlet. It is a domestic, and not a public, ceremony. The wife spends a few days in her husband's home and returns with the child to the village of her parents. She has as yet no hut of her own in her husband's homestead.

591 When his first-born has been weaned the husband builds his wife a hut in his father's homestead facing the family kraal. He then goes to ask his parents-in-law for his ● 585 wife. They do not deny him, even if, as is likely, some of the bridewealth cattle are still owing. They give her a horn spoon and a gourd and she takes these with her to her husband's home. The gift of a spoon is emphasized by the Nuer in speaking of marriage, because it is a recognition that the woman is now, in the full sense, a wife, who will eat of the porridge of her own gardens with the milk of her own herd. She now milks her husband's cows instead of her father's and hoes the gardens of his home and not those of her childhood. Before she is given a spoon, even if she hoes a garden at her husband's home she takes the harvest back to her father, or she may live at her husband's home and cultivate in her father's village, if it is not far. It is only when a man's bride has borne him a child and tends his hearth that she becomes, in the Nuer sense, his wife. She then makes a *bwor*, a mud fire-screen, and the spirit of his lineage comes to dwell there. Later his father tells him to build a byre and gives him a few cows to start a herd.

The marriage has thus reached completion through many stages: betrothal ceremony, wedding ceremony, consummation ceremony, the birth of a child, the [606] bringing of the first-born to his father's byre, and the presentation to the wife of a spoon as a sign of her domestic separation from her family. She comes to her husband's home not as a wife but as a mother whose breasts have suckled a child of their lineage.

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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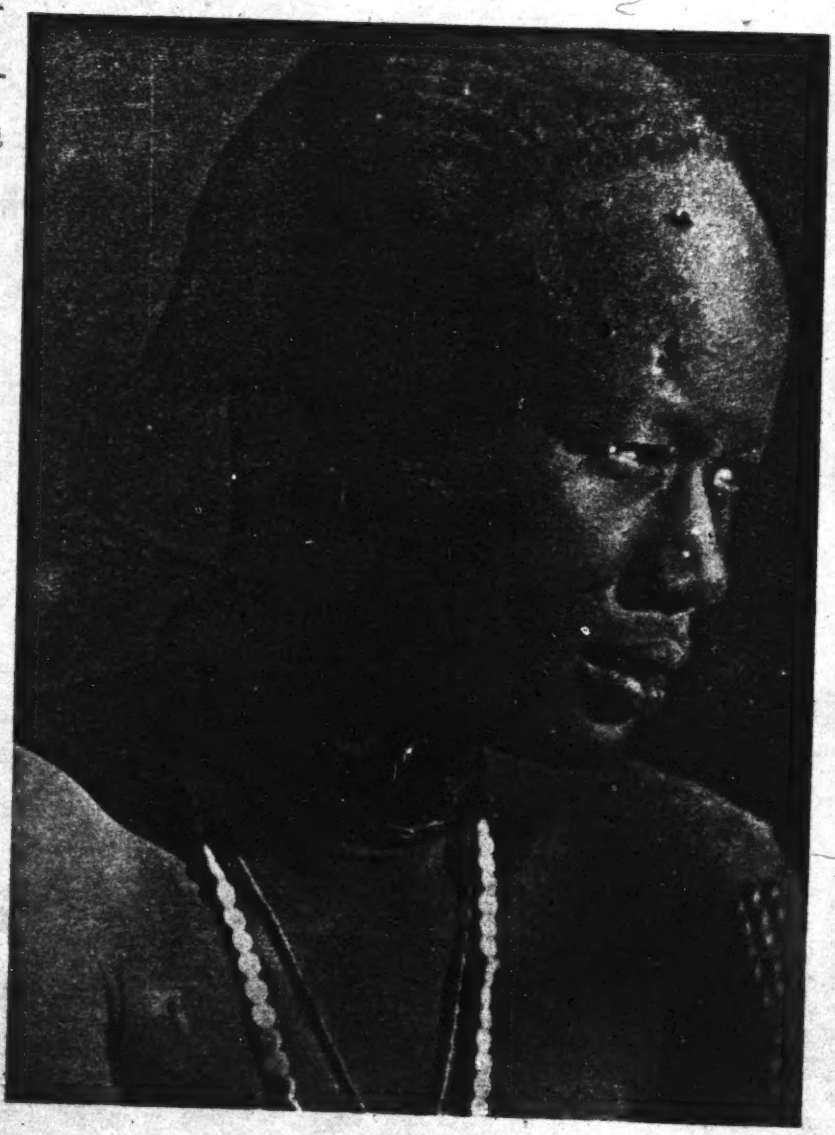

THE BRIDE

[facing p. 81]

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Marriage

Twoc ghok: 'Invocation of the Cattle'

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The betrothal ceremonies described above are followed by the first marriage ceremony, the *twoc ghok*, 'invocation of the cattle'. The length of time which is allowed to elapse between them is variable, and depends largely on the agreement reached at the *cuei* ceremony. It is not usually in the interest of either of the parties to delay matters, though this sometimes happens if the bridegroom finds difficulty in collecting sufficient cattle and yet retains the goodwill of the girl's family who wish the union to take place.

The *twoc* is the crucial ceremony of all the processes of marriage and is public in the widest sense, although the actual negotiations over cattle and the more intimate ritual are restricted to the closer kinsmen of the bride and bridegroom. Most of the bride's kinsmen who expect to receive a portion of the bridewealth are actually present, and if they are not they will usually send someone to represent their interests. We see therefore that, as the processes of betrothal and marriage proceed, increasingly large numbers of persons from both kinship groups are concerned. This emphasizes the collective nature of a union and the extent of the social ties and obligations which are involved.

Dancing begins early in the morning and the bridegroom, his father, and the *gwan twac*, as well as the senior legal representative of the bridegroom's lineage, appear dressed in cat-skins (*twac thoan*) as a conventional sign of respect to the bride's mother and her kinsmen and those of her husband. It should be noted that the bridegroom and the bride really have two representatives. At the bridegroom's side is the *gwan twac*, who is his personal aide. At the *twoc* ceremony he is represented also by the *gwan buthni*, an agnatic kinsman of a collateral branch of the lineage, whose activities are not so much personal as concerned with the interests of the bridegroom's lineage as a whole. His duties are both legal and ritual. He is expected to take the lead in the arguments which arise about the bridewealth cattle and to see that the claims of all those connected with the marriage are noted. It is also his duty to invoke the ancestral spirits of the lineage and to seek their blessing, to call out the honorific (*paak*) and spear-names (*mut*) of the clan and state any further distinctions so that all possibility of a breach of the rules of exogamy is avoided. Similarly, the bride has her personal attendant in the *ngi nyal*, who is a girl of her own age, usually from another and unconnected lineage, while the *gwan buthni* of her lineage represents them in ritual and legal procedures. The *gwan twac* and the *ngi nyal* are usually age-mates of the bridegroom and bride respectively, they are unrelated to either, and their duties are essentially personal, while the *gwan buthni*, usually much older men, represent the kinship interests of their respective sides.

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After preliminary dancing and singing, which go on more or less continuously throughout the day, the people most nearly concerned in the negotiations take up their positions in the cattle-byre. The bride's family seat themselves on the left of the entrance facing the bridegroom's party, and her *gwan buthni* sits in the central hearth (*gorei*) of the byre. On the right side mats are laid (*yih*), and on these sit the bridegroom's party with their *gwan buthni* nearest the door. The bride herself and her *ngi nyal* do not appear during the negotiations. They are usually closeted inside the mother's hut (*dwil* or *ghot*) nearby. When all are seated the *gwan buthni* of the bride breaks up some tobacco and hands it to the father, paternal uncles, and other senior relatives of the bridegroom as a symbol of friendship and hospitality.[1] It is also calculated to ease the tension, for Nuer regard the whole procedure as a nerve-racking ordeal, and like to smoke when they are nervous. He then rises to his feet and calls out the honorific and spear-names of the bride's lineage, and calls upon their ancestors to take note of the proceedings. The *gwan buthni* of the bridegroom's family then rises and scatters tobacco at the entrance of and inside the cattle-byre as an offering to the ancestral spirits of the bride. He then calls upon his own ancestral spirits, which are those of the bridegroom's lineage, to witness the negotiations, and calls out their honorific and spear-names. If the honorific or spear-names of the bridegroom coincide with those called out by the bride's *gwan buthni*, it will be obvious that the rules of exogamy preclude all possibility of the union, but the invocation is largely a formality, because it is unlikely that negotiations for the marriage would be allowed to go so far if there were any possibility of incest.

Negotiations about the cattle then begin. The number of cattle subsequently handed over, as well as those actually transferred during the final marriage ceremonies, will vary considerably, but there are a number of persons standing in certain relationships to the bride who expect to receive their share. They are the *ji cuongni*—the 'people of rights'. In theory, the bridegroom must produce cattle to meet the claims of all these kinsmen of the bride, but in fact negotiations usually deteriorate into a heated argument, not always in keeping with the supposed solemnity of the occasion, and the main object of the bride's party is to get as many good cattle as possible, and of the bridegroom's family to avoid payment. It is, however, noticeable that negotiations of this sort are less clamorous than other Nuer affairs. The *gwan buthni* are expected to speak for the parties they represent, but most of those present will have their say. The colours, sex, and qualities of the cattle are fully discussed, and it is probable that the recipients will have a clear idea of what those qualities are. As soon as negotiations

[1] For this service he can demand payment of a bull-calf. It is not, however, always paid, and it is not considered good manners to argue about the matter or press for payment.

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have started the immediate kinsmen of the bride will have set to work to find out as much as they can about these cattle. In the initial stages of the discussion, however, a certain formality is observed; it is opened by the *gwan buthni* of the bride, who will speak the names of those persons in the bride's family who have a claim on the cattle and, as the argument continues in connexion with each animal quoted by the bridegroom's family, will state to which relative they should go. No cattle are handed over on this day, though a cow called *yang gorei*, the 'cow of the hearth', which is part of the bride's father's portion, is sometimes handed over on the spot. This is a convention which is not often followed nowadays.

When the negotiations over the cattle are finished, the parties go outside for the feasting which follows. There is no prohibition on the two families eating together,[1] but the bridegroom himself and his *gwan twac* are not expected to eat of the meat or drink of the beer provided by the bride's people. They are allowed to join in the dancing, and the bride and her *ngi nyal* appear for the first time on the scene and enter the dance. The bride wears a black skin known as *twac cara*, usually the skin of a black calf.

After the dancing is over, those who are not closely related to either party go home, but the legal representatives of the bridegroom and the bride's family and some of their close kinsmen, both male and female, go into a hut specially prepared for them which is known as the *dwil koam* for the occasion. There they sit all night joking and conversing with their hosts until dawn. Another hut, known as the *dwil twacni* or *dwil kwen*, is set aside for the young people of both parties, and the bride and bridegroom, their *gwan twac* and *ngi nyal*, sit there with their friends and coevals singing and exchanging courting badinage all night through. This completes the ceremony known as *twoc*.[2] The marriage is not supposed to have been consummated,

[1] An ox is sacrificed and the meat divided between the bride's people and those of the bridegroom in a formal manner. The bulk of the meat is given to the bridegroom's family, and much of it is taken back to their home to share with the old people who have not been able to attend the ceremony.

[2] The account of the *twoc* ceremony given by Professor Evans-Pritchard does not differ in any substantial way from my own, but he mentions certain rites which take place on the same day which I have not myself witnessed but which I have heard Nuer mention when describing the ceremonial. One is the ceremony in which the bridegroom and his followers rush the homestead of the bride and he tries to spear the *buor* or mud hearth of his future mother-in-law, while the bride's brothers and the young men of her group try to stop him and to wrest from him his special wedding stick or *dang*. This and other rites symbolize the potential opposition between the two parties and the resistance of the bride's people to the demands of the bridegroom, and the final removal of their resistance by the payment of cattle. All such rites, although not always performed and often substantially different in one part of Nuerland from those performed in another, are part of the enactment of marriage and are highly symbolic of the conventional attitude which both parties are expected to display. From the legal point of view they are significant in emphasizing these attitudes and explaining the rules and conventions which govern the social relations subsisting between relatives-in-law. They are not, of course, the subject of subsequent litigation.

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but has acquired by this time a degree of legality. Some Nuer say that the marriage is now legal in the sense that, were another man to have intercourse with the bride, full compensation for adultery could be claimed by the bridegroom. Lak and Thiang Nuer at any rate say that the significant act which confirms the status of the bride as a wife and which subsequently will be recognized in law, is the ceremony known as *yier nyal*, which takes place on the evening immediately after the conclusion of the negotiations for the cattle, when the bride, and also her brothers and sisters present, are rubbed with butter by the *gwan buthni* of the bridegroom. The legal status of the bride in relation to the bridegroom and his family at this point in the social and ritual processes of marriage (and it must be remembered that the bride-wealth has not necessarily yet been transferred in full to the bride's family) is a controversial subject and one which is sometimes disputed in legal arguments. The subject of the legality of marriage is discussed later.

The *twoc* ceremony, at which negotiations over the cattle are completed and the blessing of the ancestral spirits is publicly invoked, does not usually take place before the girl has not only reached puberty but is ready for marriage. When talking of a girl who has reached marriageable age the Nuer will say that she is ready for the *muot* ('shaving') which is the next ceremony to take place. *Muot* amounts to a public recognition of physical consummation, although this does not necessarily mean that the girl has not had sexual relations with her bridegroom before. In fact, previous to the *muot*, he has no legal right to physical consummation and must visit his wife in secret, though her family will usually allow him to do so. *Muot nyal* therefore follows the *twoc* ceremony almost immediately.

Muot nyal: 'The Shaving of the Bride'

The ceremonies which are known collectively under this heading are of distinct legal significance, as will be seen later, and include three important stages.

Loiny deb: 'Loosing the Rope'

First, the bridegroom with his *gwan twac*, again suitably dressed in cat-skins for the occasion, accompanied by other youths of his own age, goes to the bride's home to ask for her people's official consent to consummation. There they enter a hut specially set aside for them and are joined by the bride, her *ngi nyal*, and other girls of her lineage and neighbourhood. They spend the day and the whole of the night in conversation and singing. There is as usual a good deal of sexual badinage, but no physical consummation. Next morning, the bridegroom approaches his mother-in-law on the subject of the *muot* which is to follow. Before giving her consent she will expect to receive, or

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at any rate obtain the promise of, special presents, which are known as the *nyin daba*.[1] These include a goat or two, a spear, a fish-spear, a ring and other offerings, and if she has any co-wives who stand in the relationship of mother to the bride they will expect to benefit too. There follows the ritual performance known as *loiny deb*, 'loosing the rope', which symbolizes the bride's release from her father's homestead.[2] The bridegroom and his representatives stand on one side of the cattle-byre, the bride and her friends on the other, while her father casts a cattle rope between them. The bride is then ceremonially dressed in the clothes which distinguish a married woman from unmarried girls: a leather apron or a skirt of plaited cotton.

Noong nyal: 'The Bringing of the Bride'

The same evening, representatives of the bridegroom go to inform the bride's relatives that all is ready for them. The bride is then conducted to the bridegroom's home by a party of her girl friends (who are called *nong*, 'bringers'). On her arrival she sits down on a special mat provided for her outside the bridegroom's house by his *gwan buthni*. A bull is brought out and sacrificed, while the *gwan buthni* again calls out the honorific and spear-names of the lineage and calls upon the ancestral spirits to bless the union, to accept the bride, and to give her male children to uphold the spear-name in posterity and girl children to bring cattle to the kinship group. The bride then lies on the mat and is covered with a skin (*twac cara*). Meanwhile the bridegroom presents his mother-in-law with a goat or sheep in order to release her, temporarily at any rate, from the taboo on eating in his home.[3] The bride is then assisted into the hut and the bridegroom, whip in hand, goes after her. After he has given her a thorough beating inside the hut (*woc dhouri nyal*), the couple spend the night together and the marriage is said to be officially consummated. The beating is said to symbolize the bridegroom's authority over his bride who is now his wife, emphasizing the rights he now has in her.[4]

Muot nyal: 'Shaving the Bride'

The next day the *muot nyal*, the actual 'shaving of the bride', takes place. In the morning the bride is usually taken away to the home of some unrelated person nearby, but is brought back to the bridegroom's home towards evening. Her head is then ceremonially shaved by one of the senior female relatives of the bridegroom, usually his elder sister,

[1] *Nyin daba*, 'the things of bearing'. In other words the mother's due for bearing the bride and bringing her up.

[2] *Deb* means a cattle rope, and the phrase signifies her release from her father's herd.

[3] She does not, of course, eat with the bridegroom himself, or with any of the male members of his lineage, for women do not eat in the company of men on any occasion, but she is thereby allowed to partake of the food of the house with the other women.

[4] In the case of opposite twins this performance is inflicted on the bride's twin brother as well.

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585 a co-wife of his mother, or sometimes the wife of his *gwan buthni*. At any rate the shaving should be performed by a married woman of the bridegroom's family, and signifies the bride's reception into the status of married woman in that family. She is then taken once more to her own home.

After these ceremonies are over the bride rarely takes up residence in her husband's home, but lives for a period in her own home, where her husband has the right to visit her. Often a special hut is set aside for her there. There is no general rule in this matter, but it is regarded by the Nuer as proper that she should remain in her own home until her first child is born and weaned, for until then, although the marriage has a legal basis, it is not considered to be confirmed. Sometimes, however, the husband has no one to assist him in his home and to cook for him, in which case he may receive permission from his wife's people for her to live with him permanently as soon as the *muot* has been performed. When the first child is weaned, the wife's mother can claim the *yang doth gata*, the 'cow of bearing a child', a cow which is considered a fee for assisting the girl to give birth to a child. This is usually followed by a formal change of residence. The *yang doth gata* is the last cow which need be paid by the husband, although his wife's family may beg him to give them other cattle when further children are born and weaned; but he is not bound to do so and claims of this sort, if they ever arise, would not nowadays be upheld in a Nuer court.[1]

Conclusion

This concludes a very condensed account of the ritual and social processes of marriage among the Nuer. It is the payment of bridewealth which legalizes a union, and the fact that some of the ceremonies are sometimes not performed at all is not necessarily evidence in Nuer courts today that a marriage is not a legal union. The payment of cattle, however, usually follows the ceremonies described. As Professor Evans-Pritchard has pointed out, 'payments of cattle and marriage rites therefore tend to alternate, though there is no fixity about the alternation and no marriage is exactly the same as another in this respect'. In fact, it is unlikely that a ceremony would be allowed to take place unless the appropriate stage in the negotiations over cattle had been reached, so that in seeking to determine the legality of a union, a Nuer court will first ask what ceremonies have been performed. The issue in such cases concerns not so much the number of cattle paid or to whom they were paid, but the liabilities and

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[1] It may be noted here that among some Nuer tribes the husband may claim a cow from his wife's family, the *yang jokni*, 'cow of the spirits'. I do not think this is normally paid unless the first child dies, and it is then given in the form of a dedication to ancestral spirits to ensure that the next child will live.

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rights of the husband in his wife. It would be relevant, for example, if a woman committed a wrong. If she killed someone, the payment of compensation would be a liability on her husband if she was legally his wife, but if there was insufficient legal determination in the union, the responsibility would rest with her own kinsmen. Similarly if a man lies with a woman who is not his wife, he may be charged with adultery (*dhu ciek*) and compensation will be claimed, but he might with justification plead that she is not a married woman in the legal sense, and therefore the act is not adultery. In the event of his proving that the union is not a legal one, he has no liability to the husband, but this will not entirely absolve him from responsibility, for in certain circumstances her kinsmen may claim damages on the grounds of seduction of an unmarried girl. There are, of course, many circumstances which will be considered by the court, circumstances which are discussed later under the heading of wrongs in relation to women. In such cases the legality or otherwise of the marriage is in issue, and it is sometimes difficult to find out what constitutes legality. In most tribes it seems that the ceremony which is considered to legalize the union is the *muot*, but this, as will be seen later, is not a universal law among the Nuer.

5. THE DISTRIBUTION OF BRIDEWEALTH

When a man wishes to get married his relatives will usually assist him to collect the necessary cattle in addition to those already allotted to him in his father's herd. There are no set rules governing the actual assembly of bridewealth cattle, and in any case the circumstances are too varied to warrant generalization on the subject. Brothers should marry in strict order of age, and the majority of the cattle they use for the purpose will be drawn from their father's herd. The legal father of a family is responsible for the distribution among his sons of those cattle which have come to him as his rights in the bridewealth cattle of his sisters, daughters, and other female relatives. If he is dead, his legal representative will be his brother, usually the senior paternal uncle of his sons, or his eldest son. The assembly of marriage cattle is, however, partly dependent on the rules of distribution applied to previous marriages in the bridegroom's family. In the application of these rules we shall see that there is a tendency to alternate because no family is exactly symmetrical. There is usually more than one claimant to one particular portion and none to another. In the first instance the junior claimant will have to await his turn until the next marriage in the family; in the second, the portion will be inherited by the claimant's heirs. In some cases these will be his own sons, in others, his brother's sons. There are conventions which govern the inheritance of rights in such cattle. The portion allotted to the mother

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Photo: Dr. J. P. Hess

THE BRIDEGROOM

[facing p. 160]

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wives of men of other age-sets may one day become his mother-in-law. I have never heard it suggested that men have any sexual rights over wives of their age-mates and Nuer were always shocked at my enquiries about this point. I think that they would regard adultery with the wife of an age-mate as worse than ordinary adultery and in the light also of a ritual infringement ; but I have no certain evidence about this.

But it is chiefly at feasts that the age-sets are divided up ceremonially as I have explained above. The *kau* of an animal goes to the *ric matot*, the junior age-set who may eat themselves or may share the meat with the set directly senior to them, according to the seniority of the set to which the owner of the beast belongs. One informant gave me a general example without specifying the seniority of the owner of the animal. He said that at a feast the *kau* would go to the *Lithgac* in Lou country, the *bum* to the *Maheri* and the *juak* to the *Boiloc*. If a *Dangunga* killed the animal we would therefore expect the *Luac* to eat with the *Lithgac*, the *Dangunga* with the *Maheri* and the *Boiloc* by themselves or with any remaining members of the *Thut* set ; while if the animal belonged to a *Maheri* we would expect the *Dangunga* to eat with the *Maheri* and the *Luac* with the *Lithgac*. I may have stated this arrangement too rigidly, and even erroneously, as I rely on one or two casual remarks, and it will be necessary to observe actual feasts before one can say for certain how the age-sets are usually divided at them. One informant (Jok) told me that sometimes at a marriage feast the father of the bride will kill a "*yang rica*," "a beast of the age-set," for all the members of his age-set, who would make a special point of coming to the wedding. He said that in this case members of other age-sets would not be provided with meat though they might beg some from the age-mates of the bride's father.

One of the actions of the age-set system is the regulation of marriage. In my previous essay I pointed out that the clan is an exogamous group and that any near genealogical relationship through the female line is also a bar to marriage. The *ric*, or age-set, is also the basis of an exogamous group since no man may marry the daughter of an age-set. The reason for this prohibition is found in the convention by which all age-mates are regarded as brothers and, therefore, the children of one are regarded as the children of all, just as the children of a man's brother are his children also. Hence a man speaks of all the children of his age-mates as "my children," and is also barred from marriage with one

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sive act. If they have begotten children by the wives of other men they are rather proud of this evidence of their virility. 837

The legal position about adultery is as follows: If a man finds another committing adultery with his wife they will probably fight, though the adulterer will escape if he can because he does not wish to add homicide to adultery. But often enough either the husband does not know that adultery has been committed or cannot catch the adulterer in the act. If the husband is unfertile or impotent he may pretend that he is unaware of his wife's infidelity because, while he desires children, he does not wish people to think that he is condoning adultery. However, a young man is not likely to take this line. A Nuer said: "An impotent man (*luc*) who is young does not think of children but of his rights. When he is old he thinks of children and is willing that his wife should give birth in the bush (by a stranger)". Sometimes a man knows that a neighbour is committing adultery with his wife but is afraid that if he fight him he will be injured. If a man is ignorant of his wife's infidelity and she bears him no ill-will she may tell him about it because it is considered dangerous for a husband to sleep with his wife on the skin where she has committed adultery. 837 684

When a husband has proof of his wife's infidelity he may claim compensation of six cows and, as the adulterer's kin are unlikely to support him on a charge of this kind, the husband will probably receive the cattle. But if later a healthy child of the adulterous congress is born five of these cows must be returned, because "The cattle and the child must not meet in one place". The cattle paid in compensation are thought to give the genitor a claim on the child for they then partake of the nature of a legitimatization fee. The payment by the adulterer would be changed by the birth of a child from compensation (*ruok*) for adultery to a fee (*ruok*) for the child. I was unaware of this fact when I lived among the Eastern Nuer and it may be restricted to the Western Nuer. I am uncertain whether even among the Western Nuer the cattle are invariably returned but it is believed that if they are not returned the child may die and his ghost haunt his pater.

The cow that remains in the husband's kraal is called *yang kula*. The payment renders innocuous the action of the husband in having relations with his wife on the same skin on which she had relations in adultery. In most of the cases of adultery mentioned in this paper either the cattle were returned on the birth of a child or they were never paid, for often when the husband is old he does not claim compensation.

Among the Western Nuer when it is well known that a girl is a bastard begotten of a certain man, the genitor will sometimes claim "the cow of begetting" on her marriage. Her kin do not relish handing him over a cow but they often do so because there is a mystical link between father and daughter and if he does not receive a cow of her bride-wealth he may curse her so that she may not bear children or so that her children will die and haunt their pater. The husband's people are therefore anxious that a cow shall be paid that their wife may be fruitful. 585 848 431

The verb *ruok* is used to describe the paying of compensation. Thus one says *Ca ghok Galuak rok ka dhom cek Yang*, "The cattle of Galuak 684

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684 have been paid in compensation for adultery with the wife of Yang". The same verb is used for paying compensation for intercourse with an unmarried girl e.g. one says *Bi yang ruok*, "You will pay a cow" for this action. *Ruok* also means to legitimatize a child born of an unmarried concubine. The genitor says *Ca gatda rok*, "I have legitimatized my child by payment of a fee".

833 834 To describe sexual relations outside the union of marriage Nuer use the verb *lum*. The use of this word is a polite way of referring to sexual intercourse and could also be used to describe marital relations if one were to refer to intercourse between husband and wife. But it would be very unusual to refer to it. The word *lum* is used to describe the social relationship of a man to an unmarried concubine or widow-concubine, though it is a slightly coarse expression when used in this connection, and in the presence of related persons one would preferably say of a man and a widow *Mathke pi kel*, "They drink water together". *Lum* is also used to describe the courtship of a girl by a youth and refers to mere flirting or sexual intercourse alike. In fact it covers all relations between the sexes from casual intercourse to permanent cohabitation, though it has generally the sense of extramarital relations.

835 582 The rules of exogamy which obtain for simple legal marriage apply also to all the different unions described in this paper. A man may not cohabit with a woman whom he may not marry.

VI

585 431 428 588 587 The test of the nature of a procreative union is in the division of the bride-cattle of daughters born of it. When the pater is alive he receives the "cattle of the father" and "the cattle of the mother". If he is dead they belong to his sons (the bride's half and full brothers). The genitor in ghost-marriage and leviritic marriage has no legal claim to the "cattle of the father" or the "cattle of the mother". They belong, at any rate in theory, to the bride's brothers. The genitor in ghost-marriage stands in the place of the pater with regard to the bride's brothers as well as to the bride herself so that there is no need to define ownership of the bride cattle very clearly, for in any case they join his herd. When the genitor has begotten the bride in leviritic concubinage, division of the cattle may be more complicated because the bride may have full or half brothers begotten by her dead pater, or by other men after his death. I discuss these matters in a preliminary manner here because they will be elaborated later.

The genitor in ghost-marriage and in leviritic marriage may always demand a cow for his services for having begotten the bride. Similarly a man who lives with a widow-concubine may demand a cow on the marriage of her daughter on the grounds that he has begotten her and, if he acted as her foster-father, he may claim another two or three head of cattle for having acted as bread-winner to the family during her infancy and adolescence. He says "I cut meat for them" in reference to the fact the children have been nurtured by his labour as herdsman, gardener, and hunter.

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When a man merely visits a widow for purposes of procreation and is not a resident member of her household, and therefore not foster-father to her children, the cow which he receives on the marriage of each daughter he has begotten by her is called *yang leta*, "cow of the loins." One uses the same expression for the cow paid to the genitor of girls born of wives of women, for he also is not usually a permanent member of the household. However, this expression is slightly vulgar and when the genitor is the mother's partner in a more durable union people prefer to speak of a *yang dieth*, "cow of begetting", or *yang twac*, "cow of the genet's skin". It is called *yang twac* because a man who has married a wife to the name of a kinsman wears in marriage ceremonies the skin which the kinsmen would have worn had he been alive, and because men living with women in leviritic marriage and widow-concubinage always partake to some extent of the attitude of respect of husbands towards their wives' relatives —an attitude expressed most noticeably by the wearing of a genet's skin around the loins in the presence of their relatives-in-law. Thus they speak of *Yang me ci rit ne twac naru*, "The cow with which you twisted to your front the genet's skin of your maternal uncle", for when you married your maternal uncle a wife you sat in his place in the byre of his wife's father during the bride-wealth discussions, and therefore wore a genet's skin, which is tied first so that it falls over the hip and is then twisted to the front to cover the genitals.

When the genitor is also a kinsman of the pater, having married a wife to his name or having lived with his widow, he receives besides "the cow of begetting" whatever cattle are due to a man standing in his particular relationship to the bride's pater. Thus when a man marries his brother a wife he receives "the cattle of the father's brother", and when a man marries his maternal uncle a wife he receives "the cow of the paternal aunt", unless his mother is still alive, for if she is alive she receives it.

As explained above, in certain circumstances an adulterer may ask for a cow in recognition of his physiological paternity. However, this is certainly not always asked for nor, if asked for, granted. If a man begets a female child by a girl whom he is courting and then refuses to marry her, he would not have the effrontery to ask for "a cow of begetting" when his natural daughter is married. He would risk having his skull broken by a club if he were even to visit his natural daughter. Of such a child they say *Caa dieth gooka*, "It was born in the grass".

When the daughter of an unmarried concubine is married "the cattle of the father" go to her genitor because by payment of a fee he has made himself her pater, though not the husband of her mother. On the other hand "the cattle of the mother" belong to her sons and these may be, or may not be, natural sons of the same man who begat the bride.

This terse statement of the way in which division of bride-wealth indicates the various degrees of paternity will be better understood if Diagram No. V is studied.[1] In Fig. I when C ♀ is married "the cattle of the father" and "the cattle of the mother" go to A ♂. If A ♂ is dead they go to D ♂ and P ♂. In Fig. II when C ♀ is married the cattle of the parents belong legally to D ♂. Z ♂ would receive "the cow of begetting"

[1] [see p. 27. - Analyst]

11:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1945
FJ22 Nuer FJ 22

585 431 possibly three or four cows for having brought C ♀ to maturity, the cattle due to him as a father's brother and perhaps any cattle due to the grandparents X ♂ and Y ♀. In Fig. III when C ♀ is married the cattle of the parents go to D ♂, P ♂, Q ♂, and R ♂. Z ♂ gets the "cow of begetting", probably an extra cow or two of his services to the family, what is due to him as a paternal uncle, and, perhaps, any cattle due to the grandparents X ♂ and Y ♀. Some of "the cattle of the father" would be the portion of R ♂, and the "cattle of the mother" would be the portion of D ♂, P ♂, and Q ♂. In Fig. IV "the cattle of the father" and the "cattle of the mother" belong to D ♂, P ♂, and Q ♂, "the cattle of the father" belonging more particularly to D ♂, who alone of the children was begotten by their pater. T ♂, who is living with the widow and who has begotten by her two sons and a daughter (the bride C ♀) receives "the cow of begetting" and three or four head of cattle for having brought the family up. In Fig. V B ♀ is an unmarried concubine who has borne a son D ♂, and a daughter C ♀, to A ♂, who has paid legitimatization fees for both children. She then left A ♂, and went to live with P ♂, by whom she has borne a son W ♂. On C ♀'s marriage the cattle of the father belong to A ♂ and the cattle of the mother go partly to D ♂, and partly to W ♂. As A ♂ is pater to C ♀, there is no "cow of begetting". In the statements made above I give only the principles of distribution of bride-wealth. Actual distribution is often more complicated and depends on variable conditions.

VII

Before asking the reader to accompany me round a Nuer village to enquire into matrimonial and domestic conditions I would ask him to bear in mind in a summarised form the following main features of Nuer marriage:—

581 585 431 (A) It is payment of cattle which defines the exact status of each member of the various procreative and domestic groups to the other members of the same group, or, otherwise expessed, the status of each member receives recognition by payment of cattle. The man in whose name cattle were handed over to the kin of the woman at her marriage is the pater of her children, whether he lives or dies—even a woman who marries a wife being counted as the pater. The cattle of the father invariably go to him or to his heirs. Likewise the bio-sociological father in his various degrees of physiological and foster parent is recognised by payment of cattle, and payment of cattle legitimatizes children born out of wedlock. Nuer discuss all these relationships in the idiom of cattle.

611 (B) The position of pater is legally predominant. Through him even though he did not beget or even see them, his children trace their descent. They belong to his lineage and clan and share in all that traditionally pertains to these groups. From him they inherit. His herd is their birth-right and any cattle which would have been due to him had he been alive belong to them as his heirs. Whatever social or ritual status he may have had they may succeed to. Little though their relationship to their

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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the first dose does not bring the desired result in the form of her assent. Scolding is also resorted to, her lack of regard for her people being especially urged. 584 593

She may be strong enough in her determination to withstand the beating, but many girls succumb to the combined beatings and scoldings. She is then willing to send word to the groom that she assents to the family's arrangement for her future, but that assent does not imply that there is any willingness to be his wife or any love, but merely an assent to the marriage because of the persistent insistence of her family.

Sometimes, if the bride is very persistent in her objections, the bridegroom may withdraw his offer, not wanting a wife who will be so unhappy with him.

But if her objections are not too violent, the family usually depend upon scoldings and beatings to silence her, and the plans for taking her to her husband's village proceed. When she has gone to her husband's house, and if she is still persistent in her objections, he may beat her and his people may put thorny branches in front of the door, thus blockading her way of escape should she resist him. But they tell me that these cases are rare.

Many weddings take place in the dry season before the people go to the fishing camp. [585] ●

If the girl has jilted the man who has paid cattle for her in order to take the man of her choice, as I describe in chapter VI, the wedding dance is not held, and there is no set time for giving her the garb of the married woman. She usually does not wear the beads in her ears that are the insignia of her married status. Keeping quiet and letting the commotion they have caused subside seems to be the object. Sometimes they have the wedding dance when the child is a year or two old, but it may be dispensed with entirely. 584

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

THE WEDDING

585 But if all has gone well the day is set for the wedding
535 dance. The food is ready, word has been sent around that friends may come. The bridegroom and his people bring the cattle.

Girls in their grass skirts wearing every possible ornament are there. Men and boys, their bodies also ornamented as much as possible have come, carrying their spears and clubs, and some few with guns. From a distance the dance looks like a huge cloud of dust, but as one nears the scene the glint of spears is seen as the men run and jump up and down advancing upon some imaginary foe. The men dance in a mass formation, high jumping being a characteristic feature. The girls also dance in a group by themselves, led by the bride. They circle around the group of dancing men, but do not dance with them.

The bride leads the girls in the dance, facing them, which necessitates her dancing with her back to the mass of dancing men. One wonders how they manage to keep from being speared or from spearing some one in this crowd.

585 After the dance the feast is held, and then this part of the marriage ceremony is over.

Possibly the same night of the dance, but more likely several days later, the bridegroom asks that the bride be brought to his village. Her girl friends accompany her, timing their arrival so that it may be evening when they arrive at his village. They are attired in their dancing skirts.

A house is given the bridegroom for himself and bride; another house is given the girl guests who have accompanied the bride.

The bride gives her husband's family all her ornaments. She is not allowed to keep a single one of them.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

The next morning before she comes out of the house where she has spent the night, the sister of the bridegroom or some other woman relative comes in to bring her the married woman's garb, which they have prepared for her, and such ornaments as they wish to give her. At this time the beads are put in her ears. When she comes out of the house she is attired as a married woman, and from this time on she must wear some kind of a loin-cloth.

Her girl friends and herself are guests at a big feast at the village of her husband that day, at which there is plenty of food and drink in evidence. When the feast is over, the girls return to the home of the bride's mother, for the Nuer bride does not stay with her husband but returns to her mother's home and spends most of her time there for the first year or two of her married life, although her husband may come to see her at any time, or she may go to his village whenever he wishes her to do so.

CUSTOMS CONCERNING MARRIAGE

A wife never eats with her husband nor sees him eat. And he, while he knows she eats her food each day, never sees any sign of it. This custom is usually observed for two or three years. Then they may eat together. The wife usually stays with her mother until her child is a year or two old at least.

The wife must render a daughter's allegiance to her mother-in-law, while her husband, in turn, must help his wife's mother as she desires, hoeing her field, or cutting her dura, or whatever she asks of him.

He never appears before his mother-in-law without a loin-cloth on, and for some time must never come to see her without sending word in advance.

The oldest son is allowed to be married first, and the family unite in getting his cattle ready for him. Then he

cattle has been handed over.(1) A marriage which has reached the final rites may be regarded as a stable union. 584

The first step occurs when a youth reaches an understanding with a girl and, having some of the necessary cattle, asks her consent to marriage. Both families are consulted and arrangements are made for the betrothal *(larcieng)*.

When a definite agreement has been reached about bridewealth cattle, the wedding ceremony *(ngut)* is held at the bride's homestead. The main features of a wedding are: discussions about cattle, which are held in the morning; the invocation over the cattle of the bridewealth, followed by the wedding dance and the wedding sacrifice in the afternoon and evening. Though this ceremony does not conclude the marriage there is every chance, once this point is reached, that the union will be completed. 585

The third of the public ceremonies is the one which, at least among the Eastern Nuer, makes the union legally binding. This is the *nut* (consummation). After it the husband can claim compensation for adultery and the cattle are regarded as marriage cattle and not as a pledge.

Marriage is completed by the birth of a child. Until then the wife sleeps in a hut at her parents' homestead and she remains with her parents until the child is weaned. The first-born child belongs to the home of his maternal grandparents and even if he is weaned in his father's home he returns to live with them. A boy stays with his maternal grandparents until he is initiated, a girl until she is betrothed. The baby is always brought to the father's home for the ceremony of laying him on the ashes of the hearth in the centre of his grandfather's byre, which takes place shortly after birth. 591 603 852

After the weaning, the husband builds his wife a hut in his father's homestead. She goes to live with him as a true wife in that she will now milk his cows and hoe his gardens and not those of her father. She makes a *buor*, a mud fire screen, and the spirit of his lineage comes to dwell there. Later his father tells him to build a byre and gives him a few cows to start a herd.(2) 591

In-Law Relationships

In-law relationships are marked by certain avoidances and displays of respect. Until his first child is born a husband does not openly visit his parents-in-law's village except in some formal capacity. After the birth he makes public visits, but he treats his parents-in-law with great respect and must not eat with them or appear naked before them. When two of three children have been born, a ceremony takes place after which he no longer has to observe these rules and prohibitions. When the father-in-law visits the husband's home and is entertained and given a bull, calf or sheep, his son-in-law may regard him as a father. The only in-law whom a man need not treat with formal respect is his wife's sister. 606 607

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *Africa*, XVIII, 1948, p.29.
(2) Evans-Pritchard, *Africa*, XVIII, 1948, p.40.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

PLATE IV

585
535

Movement in wedding dance

[facing p. 112]

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

826 811 handed man that his left hand is his right hand. It is the quality of leftness, not the thing that is left, the hand itself, which is significant for them. Similarly, the left half of the severed carcass of a sacrificial animal is not intrinsically evil. It is always eaten by someone. It is bad symbolically, not in itself, and symbolically only in certain contexts or for certain people.

411 885 562 It is suggested that the spear as a projection of the right hand symbolizes the vitality of man, the manhood of man with the associations of lineage values that go with it. It is within the logic of the representation that we speak only of men. The spear stands for masculinity. Women do not bear fighting-spears. The spear does not go with femininity. Hence also boys do not bear [881] fighting-spears till at their initiation to manhood they are given them by their fathers. Before this event they are something in between men and women, and this is shown by the fact that they milk the cows, a feminine task that men may not undertake. That neither women nor boys bear spears means that they do not go to war and also that they do not sacrifice. It is not just that a woman may not slaughter the sacrificial victim —it is not, in any case, important who slaughters it—but that, not being able to bear the spear, she cannot make the sacrificial invocation, which is made by the spear in the right hand as well as by the mouth. She can indeed address Spirit at sacrifices, but if she does so she prays (*pal*); she does not invocate (*lam*). This is understandable when we think of the spear as an extension of the right hand and hence as representing strength, masculinity, and goodness. Sacrifice, like war, belongs to that side of life, what we ourselves call the spear-side.[1]

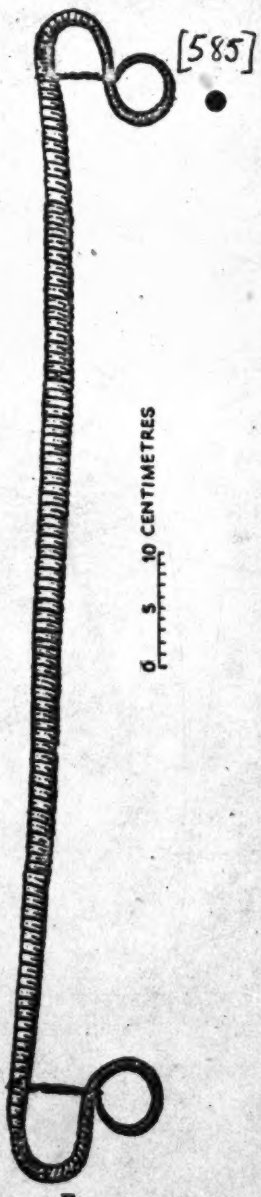

FIG. 4
Instrument used in wedding invocations

[1] I was told that a wife may act as master of ceremonies in her husband's place and shout out the spear-name of his clan at a wedding. This is the *twoc ghok* mentioned later.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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411 614 association with the spirit *wiu* through the further association of this spirit with lightning and hence with the idea of striking, so that the spear *wiu*, perhaps also because it has a material existence, has become the prototype of clan 'spears'. Of the other spear, that of the Thiang clan and tribe, who occupy a territory I have not myself visited, we are told by Mr. B. A. Lewis only in whose possession it is and that it is called *mut bah thiang*.[1] Dr. P. P. Howell, who gives its name as *mut bar thiang*, tells me that he has not seen it but Nuer have described it to him as being nearly worn through with much polishing. It is unknown whether any cultic practices like those I have mentioned above are connected with it.

411 614 613 552 Apart from the Gaatgankir and the Thiang spears the spear-symbols of the Nuer clans and lineages are only names. Through the association of a tribal community with the clan dominant in it the spear-name of this clan is shouted out in invocations when the whole tribe goes to war but, except in this context, which I discuss below, in which a political group is merged conceptually with a clan or lineage, it is only called out in reference to a descent group as an exclusive group. Thus, when I asked a Wot tribesman whether his tribe had a tribal spear he replied: 'We have many spears. One lineage (*gol*) has one spear, another lineage has another spear, a third lineage has a different spear, and so on.' By 'spear' he meant a spear-name, not an actual spear. Consequently, if two [582] persons have the same spear-name there is likelihood of agnatic relationship, and spear-names are therefore often spoken of in connexion with proposed marriages. One hears Nuer saying in discussions about the permissibility of a proposed marriage 'what about their spears?', 'they have the same spear, they cannot marry', or 'their spear is different to ours, we can marry their daughter'.[2] At a wedding the masters of ceremonies on the bride's [585] side and on the bridegroom's side, each acting as representative 411 of his clan, begin their formal announcements that the marriage 614 negotiations have reached a successful conclusion (*twoc ghok*) 613 by shouting out their clan spear-names. The spear-name is also 597 shouted out by the master of ceremonies as the opening words of 552 the sacrificial invocation he makes when a Dinka boy is adopted

[1] B. A. Lewis, op. cit., p. 82.

[2] Should the two clans have the same spear-name this is not always a bar to the union, for secondary spear-names may indicate that they belong to different clans, or other circumstances may be taken into consideration.